527 played on the bridegroom, traditional songs were sung and the guests, particularly the men, thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The births of male children were often celebrated as were the betrothals, and the like. In modern times the government of the Republic of China decreed certain national holidays but these were little observed by the farm villages.

• 217 In addition to these occasions for relaxation, there were activities which interested some of the villagers and helped to vary their lives. Itinerant dramatic troupes occasionally performed, and until very recently the storyteller spinning out his tales to the villagers was often seen. The election of a headman for the village often involved political maneuvering and a town meeting. Pilgrimages to famous mountains or shrines were often undertaken in the slack agricultural season for religious reasons or purely for relaxation. Perhaps the most universal recreation was as in all illiterate communities gossip and desultory conversation about the weather, the crops, the iniquity of the government local disputes, and on their rare occurrence, lawsuits involving fellow villagers. Despite the grim struggle for survival the average villager tended to be cheerful, self-respecting with a robust sense of humor. He went through life with a continuous concern for his own "face" or prestige among his fellows and with the strong determination that, despite all, the fortunes of his family might steadily improve

156

B. The Pattern of Urban Life

369 Urban life, although it meant a different pattern of work, was closely akin to life in the

217 4. Libraries and Cultural Centers Small libraries have been established throughout this region to cater to the workers, farmers, and shopkeepers. In November 1950, 216 libraries were open to the public in northern Kiangsu Province, and there were some eighty small libraries in the city of Shanghai. The plan for 1951 was to add 2,500 similar libraries in the farm areas, 1,000 in factories, government offices and schools, and 3,000 in units of the armed forces within the region.[28] By July 1951, rural libraries in East China[29] numbered 1,400 and those in factories totaled 400.

The cultural center is a version of the Communist cultural "palace" on a smaller scale. Both are provided for Communist-conducted cultural activities such as discussion group meetings, political rallies, and reading classes. The larger centers have facilities for showing motion pictures. Most reserve some space for reading rooms.

In conjunction with the libraries and cultural centers, there are also popular science education centers. Through exhibits, movies, lectures, and other available means, these centers strive to furnish the public with a basic knowledge of the natural sciences.

208 D. Application and Effectiveness of the Press
204 As a Propaganda Medium

28. SCMP, No. 20, Nov. 30, 1950, p. 7.
29. Ibid., No. 136, July 17, 1951, p. 15.